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THE ART AMATEUR

DEVOTED TO THE CULTIVATION OF
ART IN THE HOUSEHOLD

A MONTHLY JOURNAL

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THE GROUP AND FIGURE IN "THE VISIT TO THE BABY." BY MUNKACSY.

IN THE A. T. STEWART COLLECTION.

MUNKACSY.



GENERAL reference has already been made in our columns to the eminent Hungarian artist whose name heads this notice. His important picture of "Milton dictating 'Paradise Lost' to his Daughters," which won a great medal of honor at the Paris Universal Exhibition, was discussed at some length in the recent article on the Lenox Library Art Collection, and the merits of

the remarkable painting, "At the Pawnbroker's," owned by Miss Catharine L. Wolfe and exhibited at the recent Seventh Regiment armory fair, were appreciatively considered in the last number of this magazine. In striking contrast to this latter, with its inky tones and painful theme, is the charming sunny picture, "The Visit to the Baby," from which we have taken the liberty to select for our illustration on this page the pleasing figures which tell its story. Munkacsy was very poor in his youth, and his early works are more or less tinged with his own melan-

choly. With his advance in prosperity one notes an advance in cheerfulness of theme and freedom of color, and this is his latest painting of importance. His favorite "bitume" he still retains, but he uses it more sparingly than of old. It is to be found largely in the picture under consideration; but it is not on the surface. One of these days, however, the "bitume" will assert itself, and the "Visit to the Baby" will not be so bright in color as it is now.

The same broad and vigorous style of execution which characterizes Munkacsy's "Milton" we observe

in "The Visit to the Baby." There is more color in the decorations of the room than in those of the "Milton," but it is so well and harmoniously distributed that it is nowhere obtrusive. The young mother, who sits so gracefully in the arm-chair, resting her hand on the table—the cover of which is pink velvet—wears a pale-blue dressing gown. She is listening with maternal pride to the exclamations of admiration and endearment to which the young lady visitors who are examining the infant evidently are giving expression. The baby, to the eye of the unprofessional male observer, is unnecessarily ill-favored; but the artist apparently has remembered to some purpose the nurse's axiom, that there is no such thing as an ugly baby, and has complacently accepted for his model the first little darling that was submitted for the honor. However, "handsome is as handsome does," and we trust that the youngster may not grow up to cause premature wrinkles of time and sorrow on the sweet, placid face of the lovely young mother who now regards him so fondly.

Munkacsy may truly be called an American protégé, American patronage having, as it were, "created" him. His first important picture, the "Last Day of the Condemned," was not bought by a Frenchman, though exhibited in Paris and adorned with a title borrowed from Victor Hugo. It was Mr. Wiltach, a compatriot of ours, who liked and bought the canvas, depositing in the artist's hands the first important sum of money he had ever earned or handled. All that season the Paris "appartement" of Mr. Wiltach was haunted by the presence of the grateful young Hungarian carpenter-painter, and the ladies of the family became recipients of his confessions of struggle, poverty, blindness and disease. American connoisseurship having secured the first great specimen of his skill, has proceeded to illustrate the later steps of his career.

THE ART STUDENTS' LEAGUE.

THE Art League of this city is a school with all the signs of life. We have seldom seen a more pleasing spectacle of enthusiasm and energy. The young professors are the pick of those who have lately distinguished themselves in the most famous ateliers of Europe. Every month an ardent Leaguer, Mr. Church, exerts himself to drum up the artistic sensation of the day—whatever is attracting the fresh attention of the painting world—to add to the little unpretending exhibition which is ever opened on the first Tuesday of the month for the gratification of the students and their friends. Thus on the 3d of December the schoolrooms were hung with dozens of color-studies freshly brought from Venice by William Gedney Bunce, who has been called the American Turner; also with the summer's painting work of young Palmer, the son of the sculptor, and a youth of singular promise; while the grand "St. John" and "Madonna" of La Farge, painted for a Paulist church and never before exhibited, though not new, were of singular interest to the pupils who had not before inspected them. The teaching at the League, whatever it is not, is full of life and conviction. The constantly swelling ranks of scholars, many of whom have emigrated with bag and baggage from the free school of the Academy, attest the popularity of this infant seminary. Mr. Chase and Mr. Shirlaw, two enthusiasts, induct the classes in painting from the model, with the enthusiasm of youth and conviction; it is expected that they will turn out many a Franz Hals from among the lively crowd of American disciples. To supplement the rather summary and impressional teachings of these enterprising instructors, Mr. Beckwith, one of our most brilliant draughtsmen when he chooses to drop his brush and be a draughtsman, conducts the classes in drawing from the antique with all the scholarly grace of his French technique. The lessons in perspective by Mr. Dielman, and in anatomy by Mr. Hartley, are additional advantages that show no elements of art-teaching to be neglected by the League. The institution is large and growing fast, and, though a self-supporting, uncapitalized scheme, has already accumulated a modest fund, out of which the expenses are assured, leaving an opportunity for occasional benefactions where a worthy but poor scholar is accepted for a time on

trust. The delicacy with which this kind of assistance is administered and concealed is another element of excellence in the school.

THE HOTEL DROUOT IN AMERICA.

THE artist Escosura was so attracted by the spectacle of the American picture-auction which he saw during the Centennial season that he painted one for the Exposition Universelle, with negro waiters and white gloves complete. The auctions of America are different from those of London and Paris in nothing more than the affectation of extreme decorum, of revered majesty, nay, even of saintly severity, with which they are conducted. A *vente* at "Drouot," in the French capital, is a rough-and-tumble affair; the auctioneers, immersed all day and every day in a hurrying succession of great sales, are dusty and mouldy-looking; they are the prisoners of their exacting trade; they do not have a chance to emerge every day, even for the necessary refreshment of a clean shirt; it is in the powdery clouds of an incessant shifting of goods, of an endless tramp of people who bring in the grime of the street, that their hurried invoices of priceless treasures change hands. There is little dwelling on a bid; the collectors of Paris are a race of forbidding old owls; it is all a dusty and toilsome and pell-mell struggle between buyers as fustly as old gamblers, and criers as musty as croupiers.

In New York how different! Think of the Chapman sale, a few seasons back, with draperied halls filled with elaborate trophies of flowers and tropical plants that disputed in beauty with the paintings. Rows of bird-cages, in whose gilded seraglios were the lustiest, boldest, most piercing singers, warranted to whistle like so many fog-horns. These shameless sopranos had their use, and were meant to create a hubbub in which conversation could be kept up without being overheard, and eulogies of the pictures encouraged. Every day a new basket of hyacinths as strong as Limburger, or the most unblushing camellias, with large cards attached, on which the names of the donors were those of persons of consideration, ardently sympathizing with the seller, as if his speculation were something particularly heroic; in due time a powerful floral design, with a still larger card, conveying the sympathies of the club frequented by him, and an inscription indicating that his brother brokers and club-fellows were ready to be melted to manly tears by his noble conduct in selling his canvas for as much money as he could get. How should an auction not prosper thus trumpeted and heralded?

Other sales have been got up on the genteel decorum principle. Seats reserved. The thick carpet on the aisles hardly betrays the footfall of the buyer who enters to bid, and blushes to find it fame. Little flying Mercuries, like theatre-ushers, thrust their pink young ears into the mouths of the purchasers, whose lightest whisper is conveyed to the auctioneer, and the bidding goes on with the privacy of the Catholic confessional. Something of this sort is to be noted in the great sale of this season, the Sherwood-Hart sale. The pictures, small and gem-like, had been spangled over the walls of the Academy, and formed a more popular attraction than the yearly exhibition of our N. A's. In due time, at Chickering Hall, the portly auctioneer, in his whitest wristbands, attended before the fashionable audience like a more amiable Ardit, and conducted the proceedings with that blandness, that persuasive tenderness, that suggestion of deep deference, that discreet show of jewelry and art criticism, which he reserves for great occasions. The privacy of buyers was respected as though their offers were State secrets. The auctioneer behaved as if he would rather remain in ignorance of the names of his purchasers than know them, and as if even the statement of the prices were disagreeable to his feelings and would have been omitted if bidding could be logically conducted without bids.

How much of farce, how much of play-acting, goes with the ordinary auction-bouffe! Far better is the grimy, dusty, threadbare realism of the Hôtel Drouot. It would be better, too, if the heads of our great auction marts would supervise the character of their consignments. We do not accuse these gentlemen of suborning a forgery, but forgeries are constantly foisted upon them by picture-sharpers, and the respectable messieurs are made to look like cheap-

jacks. Thus on February 20th, 1878, a colored photograph of Knight's well-known picture of "Washerwomen at Poissy, France," was sold in the highly respectable gallery on Twelfth street and Broadway as a painting, and called "Washday in Germany, by Dalmer." The master of fiction who invented that plausible cognomen, "Dalmer," and transplanted to Germany a lot of peasant women in the Frenchiest of French costumes, was certainly not one of the gentlemen in the counting house at Clinton Hall. But because they had no expert to defend them from such little tricks, the contempt of the proceeding fell on them. Of course it is not the auction house that is guilty in this and so many like cases, because these small forgeries have no profit considerable enough to attract them, and are only found in the "canaille" collections, sold at vile prices. But though they are not guilty, except of carelessness, they contract the stigma of culpable fraud. Let our stylish auction houses suppress a part of their upholstery and pay the salary of a competent judge. Let us have some of the "expertise" as well as some of the simplicity of the Hôtel Drouot.

ARE WE A MUSICAL NATION?

A GREAT deal is written and spoken, and with some cause, about America as a music-encouraging nation; and to a certain extent the praise bestowed upon her in this connection is doubtless deserved. But a close observer sees that the elements of show and sensationalism, to which this country is so generally abandoned, have much more to do with our apparent musical progress than any real love of the art.

What makes the success of an opera season? The sensational star. Mapleson has proved this, this winter. Mlle. Valleria is a better artist, take her for all in all, than Mme. Gerster, and the company, as a whole, is stronger than that of last season; but, for lack of a sensational singer, the receipts are far short of those of last year. Mapleson's importation of Mme. Marimon may give a fresh impulse to his season; but, if so, that will only be an additional proof of the truth of this statement.

The highest forms of music are concerted, not solo; as the highest forms of composition are polyphonic and harmonic, not one-voiced and melodic; and the real musical standard of a nation can be pretty accurately gauged by the amount of interest it shows in concerted enterprises, vocal or instrumental. Tried by this test, America has but little cause for self gratulation.

Take this city of New York alone, and what do we find? We find Theodore Thomas, after ten years of hard struggle, forced to disband his magnificent orchestra and driven westward to Cincinnati. We find the Philharmonic Society struggling against years of partial neglect and pecuniary depression, and only held together at all by an amount of personal self-sacrifice in its members which is uncommon in the German musician. We find the interesting and excellent "Chickering Symphony Soirées" of last year abandoned this year on account of the beggarly subscription list. We find a musical garden floating on the topmost wave of success, thanks to a judicious mingling of waltzes, polkas, marches, cigars, and beer; aided by considerable humbug on the part of the conductor, who uses his bâton as though he were beating eggs, and evinces an alarming partiality for his own compositions. We find the Philharmonic Club—a little band of seven excellent musicians, who work faithfully and well—fighting nobly against discouraging circumstances, and threatening, to an unprejudiced on-looker, to go the way of the "Mason and Thomas" and "Onslow Quintette" chamber concerts. We find that there have come up and gone down, in succession, the Sacred Harmonic Society, the Mendelssohn Union, the Centennial Choral Union, the Vocal Society, the Church Music Association, and many other choral societies whose very names are now forgotten.

And to set against this we have—what? The success of a military band (and even that success is waning as it loses the impulse given it by a brilliant European tour), and of the Oratorio and New York Symphony Societies!

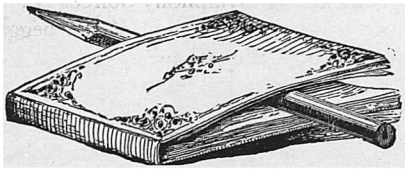
Rubinstein's intense personality roused a feeble ripple of real musical interest; but it died away soon

after he left us, and none of the great pianists who have visited us since has been able to revive it sufficiently to make a pecuniarily successful tour. Even Joseffy is, we are told, not doing well.

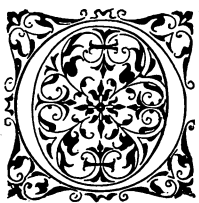
Let us turn for a moment to England, usually looked down upon as un-musical, and see the difference. There is hardly a town or city of any size but has at least one choral society, and in some cases these societies have existed for one and two hundred years. The nearest resemblance to an English Choral Society in this country is the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston; but the singing of this body (confessedly the most able in this country), even at its best, sounds rough and unfinished to ears accustomed to the unflinching precision, delicate "nuances," and unforced power of the finest English societies. And the interest taken in this society is purely local. The craziest upholder of America's musical pretensions will hardly dare to claim that the local success of a single society proves the musical taste of the nation. What, then, must be our decision? Alas, in view of these facts, and in spite of the pretty speeches made to us by our foreign musical visitors (and they dearly love to tickle our self-love with sweet phrases), we must conclude that we are not yet a musical, nor even a music-loving, nation.

Moreover, against these pretty speeches publicly made must be considered some private speeches from these same flattering foreigners not so complimentary. When a great composer, after conducting one of our principal orchestras through a composition of his own, confided to a friend that they had "played it like pigs," he probably spoke in a moment of irritation and rather more strongly than circumstances warranted. When Essipoff complained that her audiences in this country "froze her" so that she could not do herself full justice, she perhaps betrayed an unnecessary and abnormal amount of sensitiveness. When a certain fine French tenor, after delivering most artistically and exquisitely a difficult and dangerous recitative to a silent house and bringing down uproarious applause by a high C, decided that he was singing to an "audience of fools" and declared that "if all they wanted was high notes they should have them," he undoubtedly made a hasty judgment and an unwise resolution—the latter, certainly, as he left this country with his voice seriously injured by the strain he had put upon it. But it may, perhaps, be worth while to weigh these private utterances of our foreign visitors against their public ones, and lower our national "bumptiousness" far enough to draw a just conclusion from them.

And that conclusion is this:—that we certainly are not yet a musical nation, although there is no reason why we may not become so. The necessary elements are here, but they are as yet uncombined. Happily, however, the careful student already sees the stirring of that "little leaven" which may eventually leaven the whole lump; and, fifty years from now, we may proudly and justly answer in the affirmative the question which heads this article.



My Note Book.



N the strength of the reports of the almost fabulous profits made by New York picture importers, an enterprising English dealer who buys on long credit recently landed here with a supply of paintings by modern British artists, on which he hoped to

realize in time to meet his obligations to their owners. The enterprise was a failure, and the adventurous stranger went home a wiser and a poorer man. New York picture buyers know next to nothing about English artists, the best of whom, indeed, hold their works at higher prices than importers could well afford to pay for them and make the modest few hundred per

cent. profit with which they could reasonably be satisfied. One of these days, however, when our wealthy connoisseurs set the fashion, there will be a demand here for the works of the best English artists. The rage for the products of the French realistic school must have nearly spent its force. When the time for English paintings *does* come they will be duly puffed and advertised and sold by the same dealers who now pooh-pooh them, and there will be no room for the English dealer to come over here and take the honest crust of bread out of the mouth of the worthy American (or naturalized) citizen.

* * *

At the Gilbert sale at Leavitt's recently, there were some reasonably good paintings of the modern English school. There was also what was called a Turner put in a place of honor, but it was so palpably a fraud that it deceived nobody.

* * *

EDWARD MANET, the French "impressionist" who has made some mark in his own country by his defiance of nearly every rule in his profession, has sent to this city a picture he calls "The Execution of the Emperor Maximilian," which is on exhibition in a basement at the corner of Broadway and Eighth street. It can hardly be called great except as regards its size—it is about nine feet long by eight and a half feet high—and its pretensions, the dimensions of which are unlimited. Manet was a pupil of Gleyre, who told him, years ago, that he was destined to become the "Michael Angelo of bad art." He may be said to have reached at last that distinction, and it is but fitting that he should bring with him, as he does, a certificate from Zola, the Dickens of bad literature. The author of "L'Assommoir" says, "I assert that this canvas is truly the flesh and blood of the painter," which I am not prepared to deny, never having had the privilege of seeing this extraordinary incarnation. "It is he and nothing but he," continues Zola, which is an assertion that may be accepted in this country without reservation, for certainly on this side of the Atlantic we have nothing to conflict with the claim that it is entirely unique. "It will remain the most characteristic example of his talent as well as the highest type of his power," his panegyrist goes on to say, clenching the Michael Angelo prophecy and accounting satisfactorily for the oft-repeated refusal of the Salon to admit Manet's works.

* * *

THE portrait of the Prince of Wales, by Bastien-Lepage, which is to be exhibited at the Paris Salon next year, has required no less than eighteen sittings. Henry VIII. gave Holbein only half that number for his famous historical portrait, and fretted exceedingly over that. I think it was Copley who, after taking seventy sittings from a lady whose portrait he was painting, left the room, and, turning the canvas with its face to the wall, told her not to look at it; of course she did look, but it was only to find that the artist had painted out the entire picture.

* * *

If Mrs. Butler, the now famous painter of "The Roll Call," fails in the matter of detail in her promised picture of the "Charge of the Heavy Brigade at Waterloo," it will not be from want of assistance from The London World, whose editor is full of suggestions to that lady. He reminds her that after the Peace of 1814 there were many changes in the uniforms in the British army, and cautions her against the errors of some brilliant artists who have entirely forgotten this significant fact, and have drawn their men of 1815 in the coats and accoutrements of 1814. Byron, too, made a mistake in his famous lines concerning Waterloo. They were written something more than half a century before the invention of the telephone, yet in the midst of the "revelry by night" at the famous Richmond Ball of Brussels, "the opening roar," and "the distant knell" of the firing cannon (the nearest of which were at Frasné or on the Fleurus road, each twenty miles distant or more), were plainly heard by the young lady in satin and the Black Brunswicker. Mrs. Butler is also warned not to make the Life Guards as trim and clean as they look nowadays, when all glorious in scarlet and burnished steel they trot down Pall Mall, to the delight of the children and the nursemaids; for the effect of the

night's drenching rain upon the day of Waterloo must have caused them to be bespattered up to the waist. It is further to be remembered that their gills must not be too rosy, for the men had not shaved for some time. Finally Mrs. Butler is told that she must be careful how she represents the field itself; for Waterloo as it is now is not by any means as it was then. In making the Lion Mount, so much soil was dug away as to alter quite the aspect of the surface. How Mrs. Butler is to get over this little difficulty the friendly editor does not say. I hope that she will come out right; but if, in spite of all these useful hints and her own experience, she *should* stick in the dreadful mud of Waterloo, of course she has only to call upon the friendly editor to be extricated from the dilemma.

* * *

Somewhere in Hoboken, I have been told, there is a picture factory where the gaudily-framed daubs in oil, such as are hawked outside the Stock Exchange and are sold at auction-rooms in country towns, and in some city ones too, are made by the wholesale and packed in dozens by the crate all ready for market.

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The *modus operandi*, according to my informant, is to get a good painting by an artist of reputation, reproduce the drawing in outline by means of a stencil plate, and after the coloring has been mechanically worked in by a journeyman, have the whole thing touched up by a painter of talent, who generally happens to be some broken-down Italian or German artist. The forged name of the painter of the original picture completes the canvas, which is then ready for framing. I have tried in vain to locate the factory. That there really is such a place, however, I have never doubted, for there is a uniformity in the badness of the work which betrays unmistakably the inspiration of some directing master mind. George Augustus Sala, in his "Travels in Cawdor Street," gives an amusing account of a manufacturer of pictures, and the following note, published in a London paper as having been recently received by an English artist from a man in a Yorkshire town, shows that the business still flourishes in England:

"Dear Sir,—I am in want of an artist who is good in figure and animals for which I am willing to pay 400*l.* and materials per annum for his services of six hours per day could you recommend this to any of your acquaintances. He must be of Equal merit to yourself. I keep three artists constantly employed in one of my studios.—Waiting your kind reply.

I remain Yours Respectfully,

* * *

MR. W. J. LINTON, the engraver, remains uncrushed. In no way discouraged by the perhaps unduly severe lashing he received from the press for his somewhat too candid utterances in The Atlantic Monthly concerning the new school of wood engravers, he announces his intention to return to the charge in a brochure "for the instruction of reviewers and the public." I confess to some sympathy with Mr. Linton in his late encounter, and could but regret that he should, having so much right on his side, have put himself so woefully in the wrong as he did by his invidious personalities and intemperate periods. In the magazine-art of to-day there is doubtless abundant room for criticism. Still I am by no means prepared to say that we should forswear all but old-fashioned line engravings for magazine illustrations. But I do believe that the old style of cutting the block is the most satisfactory for general results. In reproducing sketches in charcoal or pencil some admirable effects have been obtained in both Harper's and Scribner's magazines by the methods to which Mr. Linton so strenuously objects, and under certain conditions these methods are often effectively employed for general subjects of illustration, but when the engraver goes to the extent of trying to imitate on the block the "dabby" effects of the extremists of the Munich school of painters the result is a palpable failure. It can only be a matter of time—and a very little time at that—when such wretched travesties of art as the putty-nosed maiden whose portrait accompanies the poem "Blossoms" in the December number of Harper's Magazine are consigned to oblivion, and we shall all wonder how a great publishing house which has contributed marvels in fine book illustrations should ever have tolerated such puerile affectations.

MONTEZUMA.